

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION NEA-07

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8779
INFO COMSIXTHFLT GAETA ITALY
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON
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LIMDIS

DEPT PASS DOD

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2 (IMPDET)
TAGS: PFOR, TS
SUBJ: COMSIXTHFLT INVITED TO USE MENZEL BOURGUIBA

REF: THIS 7365

1. DURING A HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL VISIT (OCTOBER 25 - 29)
TO TUNIS ABOARD HIS FLAGSHIP USS ALBANY, COMSIXTHFLT VADM
HARRY TRAIN CALLED ON PRIME MINISTER HEDI NOUIRA WHO RE-
SPONDED TO ADMIRAL'S EXPRESSION OF GRATITUDE FOR CONTINUED
HOSPITALITY TO SIXTH FLEET UNITS BY SAYING THAT TUNISIA
WAS PREPARED TO BE EVEN MORE USEFUL TO THE SIXTH FLEET
BY PROVIDING "OTHER SERVICES" IT MIGHT NEED. ADMIRAL TRAIN
ASKED IF HE REFERRED TO THE SHIP REPAIR FACILITIES AT MEZNEL
BOURGUIBA. NOUIRA SAID HE DID.

2. ADMIRAL TRAIN TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT IT WAS WITHIN
THE PREROGATIVES OF HIS COMMAND TO AUTHORIZE FLEET
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UNITS TO BE REPAIRED AT ANY FACILITY WITHIN HIS REGION
OF RESPONSIBILITY IF HE IS SATISFIED AS TO ITS COMPETENCE
TO EFFECT THE REQUIRED REPAIRS. THE PRIME MINISTER THEN
INQUIRED IF HE COULD FIND TIME IN HIS PROGRAM TO HAVE A LOOK
AT MENZEL BOURGUIBA. ADMIRAL TRAIN SAID HE COULD AND WOULD
WORK OUT A CONVENIENT TIME WITH ACTING DEFENSE MINISTER
AHMED BENNOUR WHO WAS PRESENT.

3. COMSIXTHFLT WAS HELICOPTERED BY GOT TO MENZEL BOURGUIBA TO VISIT THE SOCOMENA YARDS AND PLANTS ON AFTERNOON OF OCTOBER 28. UPON HIS RETURN HE TOLD ME THAT HE FOUND THE REPAIR FACILITIES THERE "ANTIQUE" AND NOT UP TO THE STANDARD EXPECTED FOR MOST FLEET REPAIRS; NEVERTHELESS HE COULD ENVISION ITS USE FOR MINOR REPAIRS NOW AND THEN. HE WOULD PLAN TO HAVE A COMPETENT ENGINEERING OFFICER VISIT MENZEL BOURGUIBA IN A FEW WEEKS TIME TO DO A THOROUGH REPORT ON THE YARD'S CAPABILITIES, PREICES, ETC. AFTER WHICH HE WOULD CONSIDER WHETHER SOME SIXTH FLEET UNITS COULD BE SENT THERE OCCASIONALLY FOR NEEDED WORK.

4. IN THE COURSE OF OUR MEETING OCTOBER 28 WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA THE QUESTION OF SIXTH FLEET USE OF MENZEL BOURGUIBA CAME UP AND THE PRESIDENT WAS DEMONSTRABLY PLEASED WHEN ADMIRAL TRAIN TOLD HIM HE PLANNED TO LOOK OVER THE SOCOMENA INSTALLATIONS THAT AFTERNOON.

5. COMMENT: ADMIRAL TRAIN AND I HAD AGREED BEFORE OUR MEETING WITH NOUIRA NOT TO BRING UP SOVIET FLEET USE OF MENZEL BOURGUIBA UNLESS THE PRIME MINISTER RAISED IT FIRST SINCE WE HAVE MADE OUR CONCERN KNOWN TO THE GOT AT TOP LEVEL FOUR TIMES IN RECENT WEEKS. AS ADMIRAL TRAIN WILL BE REPORTING THROUGH HIS OWN CHANNELS, HE DOES HAVE AND HAS EXERCISED HIS AUTHORITY TO USE ANY SHIP REPAIR FACILITY HE DEEMS COMPETENT. HE TELLS
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ME THAT HE NEEDS TO REQUEST DOD APPROVAL FOR SUCH REPAIRS ONLY WHEN THEY ARE "UN-ECONOMICAL," I.E.HIGH-PRICED BUT POLITICALLY USEFUL. THERE IS ALREADY A HISTORY OF SUCH REPAIRS. COMSIXTHFLT ALSO TELLS ME THAT HE THINKS IN TERMS OF OCCASIONALLY SENDING INTO MENZEL BOURGUIBA ONE OF THE THREE CIVILIAN-MANNED SUPPORT SHIPS IN HIS COMMAND FOR ROUTINE REPAIR WORK (A) IF HIS EXPERTS' ADVICE INDICATES THAT SUCH WORK CAN BE DONE OR (B) IF IT PROVES POLITICALLY USEFUL TO THE USG FOR IT TO BE DONE.

6. I STRONGLY ENDORSE ADMIRAL TRAIN'S INITIATIVE IN POSITIVE THINKING. IF THE MENZEL BOURGUIBA SHIPYARD CAN DO NEEDED REPAIRS AT REASONABLE PRICES FOR SELECTED SIXTH FLEET UNITS THERE IS NO ECONOMIC NOR POLITICAL REASON NOT TO USE THEM. IF THE ASKING PRICES PROVE TOO HIGH I AM SURE WE CAN HAGGLE AND GET THEM DOWN.
MULCAHY

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